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THE INFLUENCE

OF

THE BIBLE ON LIBERTY:

AN ADDRESS,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

UNION SOCIETY OF HAMPDEN SIDNEY COLLEGE,
SEPTEMBER 18, 1845.

IBR

BY REV. S. J. P. ANDERSON,
OF DANVILLE, VA.

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CORRESPONDENCE.

Union Hall, September 18th, 1845.

Rev. S. J. P. Anderson,

Dear Sir :—The Union Society tender to you, through us, their sincere thanks for the able and highly interesting Address to which they had the pleasure of listening this morning, and sincerely request a copy of the same for publication.

Permit us to join our personal solicitations to those of the Society, which we have the honor of representing, that you will comply with this request. With the most sincere feelings of regard, and the earnest desire for your private happiness and public usefulness,

We are, dear sir, your ob't serv'ts,

G. W. GRANT,
H. LEE,
R A. PRYOR, } *Committee.*

Danville, September 22nd, 1845.

Gentlemen :—In answer to your polite note of the 18th instant, I place my Address at your disposal. If its publication will in any way advance the interests of the Union Society, or the venerable and useful College with which it is connected, I shall esteem myself amply compensated for the labor of composing it. May the Book which it commends, be your guide in life, and your consolation in death.

Yours, sincerely,

S. J. P. ANDERSON.

To Messrs. Grant, Lee and Pryor.

ADDRESS.

The Word of God rises in our estimation as human knowledge advances. Instead of being thrown into obscurity by the boasted "march of mind," its truths are not only found consistent with the most exalted achievements of the human intellect, but actually corroborative of them. Indeed, the language of inspiration seems to have been so given as often to foreshadow the discoveries of science. Like the glorious sun in heaven, it pours its light on every field of investigation.

The Bible has received some degree of justice, as to its influence on literature, science and morals. But its commanding agency in promoting human liberty—civil and religious—has generally been entirely overlooked, or has received but the reluctant homage of an incidental allusion. But literature, science and morals—the acknowledged debtors to the Word of God—are the hand-maids of true Freedom. They minister to her spirit and guard her altars. They prepare her highway among the nations, and adorn her beneficent progress. Whatever advances them exalts her. For this alone, if for nothing else, the Bible should receive the willing homage of all those who deserve the honorable appellation of lovers of liberty.

But we claim far more for the Word of God, than this indirect and mediate advocacy of the rights of man. In their direct and immediate tendency, the Oracles of Truth are the charter of human freedom. He who would contend and conquer in this noble cause, must catch his inspiration and derive his commission, not from Delphi nor Dodona,

but from the imperishable altars of revealed truth. And he must refresh himself for the conflict, not by draughts from Helicon or Castalia, but from

> "Siloa's brook, that flowed
> Fast by the Oracle of God."

But the liberty which the Bible fosters, is not unrestrained license. It may be defined as subordination to good and wise laws. Laws which alike prescribe the duties, and maintain the rights, of the governor and the governed—which proclaim, as the common right of all, "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." It marks out the proper limits of authority, and takes its stand where the power of the ruler would become tyranny, and that of the subject insubordination, and says to each, in a voice of sovereign authority: "Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther." Of this well regulated freedom, the Bible is the very fountain.

It would not be difficult to shew that Polytheism has never cherished the rights of man. It did not even allow religious liberty, though it would seem that this privilege would be conceded on its own principles. But where there were a million of gods to be worshiped, it often denied the subject the petty boon of choosing the altars of his idolatry. The cruel edict of the king of Babylon is but a fair exponent of the principles of this hydra-headed system. "To you it is commanded, O people, nations and languages, that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar, the king, hath set up. And whoso falleth not down and worshipeth, shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace."* And if this were not sufficient, the ten bloody persecutions that harrassed the followers of Jesus, from the introduction of christianity to the conversion

*Daniel, iii: 4, 5, 6.

of Constantine, would sufficiently prove that Moloch, Apollo and Jupiter are not the apostles of freedom. And those who professed to hate idolatry, partook of the same fell spirit of intolerance. The alternative presented by the prophet of Mecca to his captives, was the Koran, tribute or death. And as to the idea that the subject had certain inalienable civil rights, it does not seem to have entered even the theories of those governments which have flourished under Mohammedanism or Polytheism.

So much has been said of the liberty of Greece, that we are tempted to believe that the exiled spirit of freedom had found a refuge and a throne in the land of Epaminondas, Demosthenes and Themistocles. But let him that entertains this imagination, go with Aristides, the Just, into exile, or stand by the side of Socrates as he drinks the fatal hemlock, and this fond delusion will pass away. Were the theory of Grecian liberty perfect, such examples would prove, that though they might have had the name and form, they wanted the spirit of true freedom. But the theory itself was defective. Their laws were based on principles that would not be tolerated by us for an hour. They recognized no constitutional rights, without which liberty is but a name. The popular will was supreme. To this all the dearest rights of individuals must be subordinated. Greek liberty was a strange compound, in which lawlessness and iron rule alternated. Its history is a chequered scene, in which instances of injustice and ambition the most fatal to the rights of the people, are mingled with examples of patriotism and virtue the most illustrious. Thermopyle, Salamis and Marathon, are undying evidences of bravery and love of country. But mark the reward of the heroes who achieved those victories. Take a single illustration. Themistocles, who, by a noble sacrifice of personal interest, secured the destruction of the Persian fleet at Salamis, is driven out, by a freak of the popular will, as an exile from the home that he had saved from barbarian pillage. And

after being hunted from city to city by those who should have delighted to do him honor, finds refuge from the rage of his own countrymen, in the very court whose plans of conquest he had frustrated. This instance may be taken as an index of the notions then entertained of justice and right. In short, the history of Greece is the record of the acts of a refined and intellectual, but excitable and tumultuous mob.

And the Roman annals, whether under the Republic or the Empire, afford no better illustration of the maintenance of human rights. Rome civil, like Rome ecclesiastical, had but one idea—that of conquest. Her imperial eagle sought to sweep the wide earth. To this absorbing purpose, which ruled her spirit in all its manifestations, from the building of the walls by Romulus, till her sons, after a lapse of more than fifteen centuries, were compelled to fight beneath those walls for existence—all, all was subordinated. From this policy, it would inevitably follow, that the State would be considered as every thing, and the individual as nothing. Indeed, the State would have no need for the common herd of subjects, but as they availed to stop a breach or scale a wall. And I need not say, that here the delicate, yet noble plant of constitutional liberty, whose shadow is the sanctuary of the feeble, could not flourish. It spreads its rich foilage, and bears its generous fruits, only under the genial influence of equal laws, equally administered. No wonder, then, that it was crushed in the march of the legionaries. And certainly, in Rome, it did not flourish most when most trampled on. That is its quality, only when it takes root in a christian soil. That the Greek and the Roman enjoyed more privileges than were conceded to the subjects of the barbarous and despotic governments around them, is not denied. But that their highest attainments bore any proportion to those rights which are now, under the influence of the Bible, recognized as the common birth-right of man, none will dare affirm.

We find, therefore, no refuge for the oppressed amid all

the boasted institutions which man has framed. Let us then turn, as our forlorn hope, to the testimony of God. And here we shall find rest for our feet. We might reasonably hope that the Author of our existence, in devising a scheme for our spiritual welfare, would so arrange its provisions that they would arrest and promote our temporal interests. And thus, in conferring the greater good, include the less. And our hope does not fail us. Man's religious duties and rights, as revealed in the Word of God, harmoniously combine with his privileges and obligations as a member of the State. And he who is admitted as a free citizen of that glorious kingdom, of which Christ is the head, is thereby prepared to stand erect as a freeman among his fellow-men. The great principle by which this result is accomplished, is the doctrine of future rewards and punishments—a truth often flitting before the mind of the mythologist and philosopher, but never clearly announced and fully received, till it was proclaimed by the authoritative voice of Him who brought "life and immortality to light." In the solemn presence of this truth, the petty and transient advantages of injustice sink into their proper insignificance. The passing present motive yields to that which is drawn from the enduring future. Thus, its tendency is to make man live above the present. It points him to principles of justice which do not vary with the caprice of the moment, but stretch on through eternity. It throws its broad shield over the governor and the governed—protecting the rights and securing the happiness of each. It imposes a salutary restraint on the powerful, and gives a solemn and awe-inspiring dignity to the rights of the weak. It is only when the earthly tribunal is in full view of heaven's judgment-seat and its incorruptible Judge, that justice holds the scales with impartial hand.

The Bible, while it promotes becoming respect for the powers that be, giving them the high sanction of divine

appointment, prevents adulation and servility, by teaching the meanest subject that he and his prince are alike amenable to a bar, where there is no distinction of rank—where the beggar will appear without his rags, and the monarch without his robes of office. He who feels the full power of this truth, will fear God too much to fear man. He has seen the glory of heaven's throne, and he cannot be awed or dazzled by an imperial diadem. The christian is himself a king and priest unto God, and he cannot be the slave of a despot. His soul has held communion with the bright retinue that surround "the saphire colored throne, and Him that sits thereon," and he bears the warrant of his own nobility, in those spiritual lineaments which are at once the fruits and the evidences of his sonship with God. And he cannot compromise the dignity of his relationship, by a base subserviency to power.

The grand tendency of the Word of God is to abase the proud and exalt the humble. It is the only true and just equalizer. It represents the humblest savage, as a brother in immortality, with the most favored of the sons of luxury and power; as possessing a soul, for which the Son of God thought it not too high a price to pay his own blood. Surely, this is not the doctrine to countenance the plans of the aspiring conqueror, who is making havoc of human life and happiness, and using men as mere instruments of his ambition. It rather speaks to him in tones of stern rebuke—telling him that each tear—each groan he occasions, is wrung from one who is regarded worthy of commiseration in the high court of heaven—that the blood of the sufferer pleads for vengeance, and that it has a prevailing eloquence with the Lord of the whole earth. The Bible acknowledges no privileged classes, who are the divinely appointed repositories and guardians and dispensers of truth. It indignantly bursts away the seven seals that civil and ecclesiastical despotism have sought to fasten on it, and

offers its precious and priceless truths to the perusal of all. It has no esoteric doctrines—no secret principles—reserved for the favored few, while the multitude is to stand afar off in wonder, and fear and reverence. "*Procul, O procul este profani,*" is never written on the vestibule of its temples. Its sublime mysteries are not hidden in the deep recesses of dark groves, but are offered to the scrutiny and the faith of all. With it, the teacher of knowledge is not a veiled prophetess—enthroned in the adytum of an almost inaccessible sanctuary—but "Wisdom crieth *without*, she uttereth her voice in the *streets*. She crieth in the *chief* places of *concourse*, in the opening of the gates: in the city she uttereth her words."* It teaches to each of its votaries the solemn and exalting truth, of his own personal responsibility to the throne of God. It imperiously bids all the world to stand away from the path of the enquirer after truth. "To his own master he standeth or falleth." And along with this dread truth, and inseparably connected with it, the Word of God proclaims, in trumpet tones, the right of private judgment and liberty of conscience. He who is to be judged for himself, must needs be allowed to think and act for himself. And this open Bible proclaims, in every language under heaven, to all classes and conditions of men, without distinction, common terms of salvation—a common sacrifice, mediator and intercessor—common sacraments—a common Father, and a common *home*. The doctrine that all men are free and equal, had a place in the Oracles of Truth long ere it was announced in the American Declaration of Independence.

But in promulging these mighty truths, the Bible exerts a life-giving power on the mind of man. It teaches him to think—to think earnestly—for it holds him responsible for his conclusions. And it throws over his investigations the awful dignity and importance of his eternal interests. It sends him not to a muttering priest, or raving pythoness, to

*Prov. i: 20, 21.

learn his duty, but points him to the page on which pours the light of heaven. I repeat it, christianity admits no mere human intervention between God and man. No earthly mediator stands between him and the sun of righteousness and life, to cast a dark shadow on his hopes. Thus, the Word of God does for the torpid and enslaved mind of man, what the enthusiasm of the artist led him to demand of his finished production, when he commanded it to move and speak.

And the Bible not only gives activity to the mind, but controls the exercise of that activity, by principles of virtue. It thus imparts both the impulse and the needful restraint. Montesquieu has affirmed, that "virtue is the basis of a republic." You cannot make that man free who is a slave to vice. You may sunder his fetters—burst open his prison doors, and bid him be free. But he goes forth into the free air of heaven a bondman. The fetters are on his soul. But where intelligence and virtue are found, man will be free. He will not take his opinions on trust. He will examine the foundation of the claims that are made on him. He will not take the voice of his priest for the voice of his God. And if he questions his priest, he will question his prince. If he scrutinizes his religious rights, he will not neglect his civil. If he is a freeman in the glorious fellowship of saints, he will not be a slave in the court of kings. Civil and religious liberty are inseparably connected. Thus it is manifested, that

"He is a freeman, whom the truth makes free."

If this is the influence of christianity, well might the Abbe de La Menais call the divine author of our faith, "the great republican of his age." And hence, wherever the primitive christians established themselves, they presented an example of a republican government. The sovereign power resided in the people. They elected their own officers, and those

officers, says the justly celebrated Neander, "were destined to be, not unlimited monarchs, but rulers and guides in an ecclesiastical republic, and to conduct every thing in conjunction with the church assembled together, as the servants, and not the masters, of which they were to act."* If, then, despotic power has ever received countenance from the prevalence of a hierarchical feature in the church, it is not indebted for the compliment to the Word of God, nor to the primitive christians. And for this very reason, christianity encountered the most inveterate opposition. "The cultivated heathen," says Tholuck, "were offended at christianity precisely for this reason, that the higher classes could no longer have precedence of the common people." The faith which was founded on the authority of the son of Mary, and preached by fishermen and publicans to the poor, as the especial objects of its benevolence, did not, and, from its nature, could not, admit of privileged classes, whose rights were to be maintained at the expense of those of all others. It poured its treasures, rich and precious as they were, at the feet of all. It offered its unfailing consolations to all. It was the religion of man, and not of a nobility: and, therefore, though the common people received it gladly, the nobles could not abide it.

But we do not claim the high honor of the advocacy of liberty, as the exclusive right of the New Testament. The same spirit of freedom lives and breathes throughout the Old. The first system of laws, that recognized the rights of the people, was given from the dark clouds, and the thunderings and lightnings of Mount Sinai, by Jehovah himself. Though the Jews lived in a dark age—were surrounded by slavery throughout the world, and had themselves been slaves—yet, God gave them a code which extended its effectual protection over the meanest slave bought with money, and the stranger who sojourned for a night within the gate.

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*History of Christian Church, vol. 1, p. 193.

The Hebrew commonwealth, so far as it was a human government, that is, aside from the theocracy, was a representative republic. It possessed every feature now supposed to be necessary to a free government, except the writ of *habeas corpus*, and this was rendered unnecessary, by the absence of all laws for imprisonment. It consisted of a confederation of States, like that of Holland, Switzerland, or the United States. And when a king was demanded by popular clamor, the granting their desire was accompanied by the earnest remonstrance of the prophet of God against the folly of their choice. And even then, the monarchy established was strictly limited. Wherever, then, the Bible goes, liberty accompanies it. Those who imbibe the spirit of the Bible, and become its champions, are at once baptized by the spirit of freedom, and are ready to fight her battles. I know that Gibbon has sneeringly remarked, that he is sorry to say, that the earliest and most zealous advocates of religious liberty, have been laymen, and not ministers of religion. If he means by ministers of religion, the priests of a hierarchy who lord it over God's heritage, we freely admit the charge. For the mitre and the crown had been in *holy* alliance, long before the advocate of the divine right of kings and passive obedience, adopted the watchword, "no bishop, no king." But if he means that the real lovers of the Bible, and those who proclaimed its pure and simple doctrines, have been backward in the cause of human freedom, the charge is false and slanderous. We defy the hosts of infidelity to produce a single pioneer in this adventurous march—a single champion, who has announced any one great principle of liberty, which had not already been proclaimed by a lover of the Word of God. That despotic power gained an early ascendence in the church, I have already said. But it was an innovation—a direct violation of the letter and spirit of that book in whose cause it was professed to be exercised. Yet, even amid this general defection, God has not left himself without witnesses to the truth. In all ages of the

world, he has raised up men who have so caught the spirit of the Divine Oracles, as to assert the great truths of freedom. When the Priscilianists were persecuted in the 4th century, Martin, of Tours, an eminently holy man, denounced the procedure as a "*novum et inauditum nefas*"—a new and unprecedented wickedness. "For," remarks Mosheim, "it was not yet regarded, among christians, as a pious and righteous act, to deliver heretics over to the civil power to be punished."* This discovery was reserved for the time when the maxims of worldly policy had driven from the church the fraternal and compassionate spirit of the Man of Peace. Listen to another announcement of the great principle of freedom, made by the persecuted Grisons, and solemnly confirmed by their deputies at Ilantz, on the 26th of June, 1526: "That it shall be free to all persons, of both sexes, and of whatsoever condition or rank, within the territories of the Grison confederacy, to choose, embrace, and profess, either the Roman Catholic, or the Evangelical religion, and that no one shall publicly or privately harass another with reproaches or odious speeches, on account of his religion, under any penalty."† And this declaration of perfect freedom of conscience, is the more remarkable, as it was made by these Waldenses at the very time that the Romish church was persecuting them to the death. These accents fell strangely on the ears of despots. And do we ask, where these professors of a pure faith gained these exalted notions of human right? They do not leave us in doubt. The pure and healthful stream is traced to its fountain. In immediate connection with this edict, it is imperatively ordered: "That the ministers of religion shall teach nothing to the people, but what is contained in the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, and what they can prove by them; and that parish priests shall give themselves assiduously to the study of the scriptures, as the only rule of faith and

*Vol. 1, p. 365. † McCrie's Ref. in Italy, p. 300.

practice."* Infidels may safely revile the intolerance and bigotry of the advocates of the Bible, for it is that very abused Bible that guarantees to them the liberty of opinion and speech. Had they lived under the reign of Polytheism, they might, with Socrates, have learnt the flavor of hemlock. Yes, ask history who have been the earliest and staunchest defenders of liberty. And, from the solemn, authoritative voice of this oracle, you will hear the names of the Waldenses—those noble advocates of the Word of God, who kept the banner of freedom floating in the valleys of Piedmont, from the 4th to the 16th century, when its signal was answered by the battle shout of the Reformers from Spain, Italy, Germany, France, Switzerland and Britain. You would hear the name of Claude of Turin, John Wiclif, John Huss, Jerome of Prague; of Jerome Savonarala, who left Lorenzo, the greatest of the Medician family, to die unabsolved, because he refused to restore to Florence her liberties;† of Arnold of Brescia, who raised the standard of civil and ecclesiastical reformation, in "the eternal city," and for ten years defied the power of the tyrant of the tripple crown, in his stronghold, and ended by sealing his testimony with his blood; of Luther, Calvin, Melancthon and Zuingle, on the continent; of Knox, Melville and Henderson, the patriarchs of Scottish liberty; and Hampden and Sidney, Milton and Cromwell, the founders of English freedom.

It was the Bible that presented these champions of human right to the world, and it was a noble gift. Infidels have boasted of their advocacy of the rights of man. But they got possession of these notions, by committing a theft on the unacknowledged altars of religion. And when they got possession of the jewel, they committed the folly of putting it into a swine's snout, as is proved by the history of the French Revolution. Even the church of the Middle Ages,

* McCrie's Ref. in Italy, p. 300. † See his life, by A. G. Rudelback.

corrupt and ignorant as it was, was a bulwark of liberty. Its ministers had yet enough of the benign spirit of the Bible, often to step between the prostrate serf and the feudal noble. Impure as were its altars, they were the best sanctuaries the world afforded to the oppressed. And the advocates of the Word of God may well boast, that they who had but little of its spirit, were yet far in advance of their cotemporaries, in their ideas of human rights.

But it was the great Reformation of the 16th century, that rose as the day-star of liberty, on the darkness of the world. It offered an unsealed Bible and equal rights to the family of man. It gave to Germany and to Switzerland, all the liberty they possess. It prepared the way, and gave the patriotic spirit that was needful for the Belgic provinces in their heroic and successful struggle against the tyranny of Spain. It led to the English Revolution of 1688, by which the weak and wicked race of Stuarts were forever banished from the British throne. And it worked out its magnificent result in the American Revolution of 1776. What other triumphs in the cause of man it shall yet accomplish, time only can disclose. Its ultimatum has not yet been seen.

It is not to be denied, that the Reformation was accompanied by instances of insubordination of the most painful character—alien from the principles of the Bible, and inimical to the interests of freedom. But is it surprising that they whose eyes had just been opened should sometimes "see men as trees walking?" Those who had been bowed to the dust by oppression, when they first ascertained that they possessed inalienable rights—their heritage as members of the human family—would very naturally conclude that the authority which had proved so disastrous to them, was all usurped. In the first flush of triumphant exultation, produced by their new-born notions of liberty, they were not always able to pause to discriminate between legitimate power and its abuse. Their minds were absorbed, and their judgments overshadowed by recollections of that portentous

despotism, that based its destructive pretensions on the foundation of law. They could not think well of a tree, whose fruit had been so bitter and deadly to them. It is not surprising, therefore, that certain "lewd fellows, of the baser sort," rushed into lawlessness; that, to their untaught minds, licentiousness appeared in all the bright and beautious habiliments of liberty. But the same heavenly voice that aroused them from their torpor, followed them in their unwonted activity. Its commands and admonitions swelled above the elemental confusion, in authoritative tones, and effectually taught the supremacy of law.

But let it be ever remembered, that these outbreaks are not attributable to the teachings of the Bible—but find their legitimate source in the ignorance and stupidity produced by the absence of that book. It has ever been the policy of tyrants, whether civil or ecclesiastical, to blind the people by keeping them from the light, and then plead the indistinctness of their vision *as a reason* why they should not be allowed to go at large. But were these instances of lawlessness necessary steps in the march of freedom, we should be perfectly willing to bear the evil for the sake of the accompanying good. But they are not. Give the people the Word of God—teach them to think under its guidance, and needful revolutions can be accomplished without these blots. This truth is strikingly manifested in the fact, that those causes which gave so much trouble to the reformers in Germany, operated much less strongly in England: among the Bible-loving population of Scotland, produced but a single instance of insubordination; and in the American Revolution, appeared not at all.

The Reformation, which was nothing more than bringing the Word of God into contact with the mind and heart of the people, was the herald of liberty wherever it went. To place this remark above controversy, I need only say, that the countries over which it had most influence were Holland, Switzerland, the protestant States of Germany, and

Britain, and within their domains are found almost the only defenders of liberty, of whom Europe can boast. While those lands into which the Reformation and the Bible did not enter—or entering, were soon expelled—were Spain, Portugal, Italy, Russia and Austria; and are they not at once the defenders and victims of despotism—even to this hour?* France is a debatable ground, on which Romanism, which is a religion without a Bible, and Infidelity, which is a denial of the Bible, have waged war against Protestantism, which is the advocacy of the Bible. And France could boast a noble host of votaries of the Bible and freedom, until her Huegonot sons were made the victims of cruelty and treachery, unparalleled in the history of the world. But that soil which has been enriched by the blood of Condé and Coligny, and their compatriots, will yet be fruitful of freemen. The spirit of the Huegonot seems already to be hovering over the scenes of their former conflicts. The Bible is making its way into France, and liberty will follow.†

If you wish to see a clear illustration of the influence of the Bible on liberty, compare Spain with Great Britain, where advantages of soil, climate and position, are certainly not in favor of the latter. I need not say which has advanced, and which retarded, the progress of freedom. You will perhaps answer, that the Briton belongs to a race superior to that of the Spaniard. I know of no such essential superiority. The time has been, when the Spaniard was the superior of the Briton, in arts and arms—in literature and enterprise. But the one has clung to the Bible, and the other has denounced it. And the God whose word they have spurned, has spurned them. They would not be the

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* See Villers, on the Reformation.

†It is a sufficiently significant indication of the influence of the Bible on liberty, that when Louis XIV was in an after age persecuting his Protestant subjects in the mountains of the Alps, he directed his soldiers to search alike for fire-arms and—Bibles—weapons equally obnoxious to tyrants.—*Histoire des Pasteurs du Desert, Par. Nap. Peyrat.*

freemen of the Lord, and he gave them up to the double despotism of the priest and the prince.

The great truth, that the Bible is the fountain of liberty, is nowhere better illustrated than in the history of Scotland—the land of the Bible—a designation far more honorable than the "land of Burns"—who, though he rejected that Bible as the rule of his life, taxed the utmost resources of his giant intellect, in portraying its elevating and hallowing influence on the Scottish peasantry. It is a singular felicity of the Bible, that even her enemies have been compelled to lay on her altars, garlands of imperishable verdure and beauty. No other land can boast so many and so noble martyrs and confessors in the cause of the people. Indeed, her entire history is but a record of the struggles of the people against priest-craft and king-craft, sacerdotal and regal encroachment. The Covenanters were the authors of British freedom. The Lanark declaration, re-affirming those of Rutherglen and Sanquhar—and for which its framers were hunted down as traitors—asserted the very principles of the English Revolution of 1688, and the American Revolution of 1776—indeed, the essential principles of all freedom. "Shall the end of government be lost," said that noble paper, "through the weakness, wickedness and tyranny of the governors? Must the people, by an implied submission and deplorable stupidity, destroy themselves and betray their posterity, and become objects of reproach to the present generation and pity and contempt to the future? Have they not, in such an extremity, a good right to make use of that natural power which they have, to shake off that yoke which neither we nor our forefathers were able to bear."* Such language is worthy of George Washington or Patrick Henry. And yet, these are the men whom Hume and Walter Scott have combined to traduce and caricature, and whom the whole world has learnt to pity and deride.

* Hetherington's His. Ch. Scotland, p. 266.

The same great truth appears in the answer of the Earl of Loudon to the haughty and dictatorial Marquis of Hamilton—the representative of royalty. "I know," said he, "of no other bands between a king and his subjects, but those of religion and law. If these are violated, men's lives are not dear to them."* The same high and free spirit lives and breathes throughout the solemn league and covenant—the first great national land-mark of the Scottish Presbyterians, to chronicle their approach to liberty. And the Hon. Gulian C. Verplanck, of New York, did not indulge in a mere flight of fancy, when he traced "the origin of the American Declaration of Independence, to the National Covenant of Scotland."

It was the Bible that gave John Knox to Scotland, or rather, to the cause of liberty throughout the world. It was the Bible—which teaches to fear God rather than man—that gave Knox the character which wrung from the Regent Morton, as he looked down into his grave, the unsurpassed eulogy, "*there lies he who never feared the face of man.*"† It was the free spirit of the Bible which prompted Andrew Melville to take the tyrant James by the sleeve, and tell him, "there are two kings and two kingdoms in Scotland. There is King James, the head of the commonwealth, and there is Christ Jesus, the King of the church, whose subject James the Sixth is, and of whose kingdom he is not a king, nor a lord, nor a head, but a member."‡

And twin brothers with the Covenanters, in piety, love of liberty, and the obloquy they have incurred, were the English Puritans. Of the Puritans, Macaulay has said, "that whatever of political freedom exists, either in Europe or America, has sprung directly or indirectly from those institutions which they secured and reformed." Even Hume, the apologist for the Stuarts, the Belial of infidelity, "who hated religion so much that he hated liberty for having been

† Heth. His. Ch. Scot., p. 77. *Ib. p. 162. ‡ Ib. p. 105.

allied with religion," was compelled to admit, "that the precious spark of liberty had been kindled, and was preserved, by the Puritans *alone;* and that it was to this sect the English owed the whole freedom of their constitution." And Lord Brougham, a greater than either, said in the House of Lords, "for they, I fearlessly confess it, with whatever ridicule some may visit their excesses, or with whatever blame others, they, with the zeal of martyrs, the purity of early christians, the skill and courage of the most renouned warriors, obtained for England the free constitution she enjoys." The Puritans, like the lions in the fable, were not painters. The pens were in the hands of the Cavaliers. The Puritans were too busy in achieving liberty, to record their exploits. Yet they bequeathed their spirit and principles to the world. Their history is the history of the progress of liberty since their day. Their record is more enduring than the historical inscriptions on the pyramids. For their spirit will animate free hearts, when those pyramids are leveled with the dust. It was their love of liberty, that gave point and venom to the shafts of ridicule that were hurled against them. Liberty was to suffer in its votaries. For this, history has been falsified, and their principles, acts and manners, caricatured. Even the poet's fancy has been called into exercise against them. Dryden, the poet-laureat, thus describes "Presbytery," which includes the Covenanters, and the larger part of the Puritans:

"Last of all the litter 'scaped by chance,
And from Germany, first infested France.
Some authors thus his pedigree will trace,
But others write him of an upstart race;
Because of Wiclif's brood no mark he brings,
But his innate antipathy to kings.
What though your native kennel still be small,
Bounded between a puddle and a wall?
Yet your victorious colonies were sent,
Where the north-ocean girds the continent.
Quickened with fire below, your monsters breed

In fenny Holland and in fruitful Tweed;
And like the first, the last affects to be,
Drawn to the dregs of a democracy;
But as the poisons of the deadliest kind,
Are to their own unhappy coasts confined,
So Presbytery, and its pestilential zeal,
Can flourish only in a common weal."

Hind and Panther.

And Dean Swift strikes the same key. In his sermons on the martyrdom of Charles, he says: "On the cruel persecutions raised against the Protestants, under Queen Mary, among the great number who fled the kingdom to seek for shelter, several went and resided at Geneva, which is a government without a king, where the religion contrived by Calvin is without the order of bishops. When the Protestant faith was restored by Elizabeth, those who fled to Geneva returned, among the rest, home to England, and were grown so fond of the government and religion of the place, that they used all possible endeavors to introduce both into their own country." So, it seems, that it was the free principles, rather than the uncouth manners, of these men, that exposed them to the bitter opposition and ridicule of the royalists.

What would now be the condition of liberty, if Charles the First had, by the aid of the Cavaliers, conquered the Puritans and Covenanters? The little finger of the British monarch would have been thicker than his loins have been; the glorious revolution of 1688 would never have occurred; and the free government under whose broad shield we have now met, would be still among the dreams of Utopia.

The Puritans and Covenanters loved the cause of human rights so much, that they deemed not their lives too dear to be lavished in its defence. "They watered the tree of liberty with their tears and blood, and hallowed it with their prayers, and the generations following have reclined beneath its shade and partaken of its fruits." But how often have they forgotten their benefactors, and instead of honoring

their memories and celebrating their virtues, have magnified their foibles and travestied their manners. But these are not the first sons who have mocked at the nakedness of their father. No doubt their manners were ungainly and austere; far different from those of the school of Chesterfield; and if they had attempted to play the courtier, they would probably have made a ludicrous failure. But beneath this uncouth exterior, they concealed hearts that beat high with holy love of liberty. They fought its battles, achieved its triumphs, and left its priceless blessings as their legacy to posterity. Their sacrifice of themselves was at once an offering to God and their country—a maintenance of civil and religious liberty. And who that loves liberty will regard their nasal twang, scripture names, and long prayers, as a fair offset to the blessings they transmitted? Who would not prefer the Covenanter, who could, with equal facility, wield the sword of the Spirit against the great adversary of man, and brandish an equally dreaded weapon in the face of an earthly tyrant—to his opponent, the courtly Cavalier, who would bow with exquisite grace at the throne of a despot, that he might be allowed to blaspheme God and oppress the people? Were Puritan manners an inseparable accompaniment of Puritan principles, which they are not, I would most unhesitatingly choose the rough leaden casket, with its concealed treasure, rather than the polished golden one, that hides the emblems of death. Puritans and Covenanters lie under the accumulated obloquy of a century and a half. From Walter Scott, to the meanest sciolist and witling, all men have conspired to do them wrong. The world has been told, even by their enemies, that they have been the guardians of human freedom. And the answer is, that they had Hebrew names—wore short hair—and were sticklers in points of divinity. The few who have pleaded in their defence, have seemed to feel that their very apology needed excuse. And their voices have been drowned in the brutal clamor against men of whom their

generation was not worthy—who lived too soon to carry out their grand conceptions of human rights, and who died far too soon to share the results of those principles, when they were wrought out in a more propitious age, by the men who caught their falling mantle.

In this noble host of the sons of freedom,

"In shape and gesture proudly eminent,"

stood Oliver Cromwell and John Milton. The Protector has had more than his fair proportion of the abuse usually meted out to the Puritans. And yet, even his enemies style him "the greatest man in an age of great men." They admit, that though he was "the mightiest potentate in Europe," he "lived in a simple and retired way, like a private man, without any parade or ostentation"—that his discipline was so perfect, that "drunkenness, profanity, robbery, and the like offences, hardly ever occurred"—that though a low-born upstart, he behaved himself, in his exalted station, with "dignity and firmness"—that though he held at once the purse and the sword, he neither enriched himself nor his family—so that, when he died, almost the entire fortune of his son and successor, was expended in his funeral—that he laid the foundation of the glory of the British navy—that "though the nobles feared and the clergy hated" him, "the people, whom he treated with kindness and equity, loved him, because they enjoyed much more liberty under him than before"—"that he established an equitable form of government, which, in the course of a few generations, would have much improved the state of the Island"—that "the public revenues were strictly and economically managed, without any additional imposts"—that "he appointed for judges the most upright and distinguished men," among whom was Sir Matthew Hale—that "he never interfered with the courts of justice." In religion, he acted on the principle which recognized the rights of conscience. And

it is a remarkable fact, that he opened Great Britain to the Jews, who had been excluded by the legislation of near four hundred years. And above all, we are told that "in private life he was mild and noble in his temper." With such a constellation of virtues—so new, especially when beaming from the throne which had just been vacated by the Stuarts—it is difficult to see how we can avoid placing him in the front rank of the benefactors of man. But the world has seen no difficulty in the case. The mystery is explained in a single word. He was a *hypocrite*. This mantle hides all his virtues. Pity it is that all the thrones of the world, have not been uniformly filled by such hypocrites as Oliver Cromwell.

He had no vulgar love of mere power. If he grasped the sceptre, it was because it was falling from hands too weak and too wicked to wield it. If he expelled the Parliament, it was not till they had deserted and betrayed the cause of liberty. Though he seized the reigns of government, he assumed no unlimited powers. He asked for his family no hereditary riches or honors. And while he gave to the British people a constitution by far the best they had ever enjoyed, he reserved to himself powers not greater than those of a President of these United States. Though himself a zealous adherent to certain religious notions, he protected those who differed from him. An illustrious example of his advocacy of the rights of conscience, is found in his rescue of the Piedmontese Protestants from the cruelties of the Duke of Savoy. He earnestly remonstrated with this sanguinary despot, and accompanied this remonstrance with a sufficiently intelligible intimation, that if reason did not avail, force would be called into requisition. And as we are told that Mazarin, the prime minister of Louis the Fourteenth, feared Cromwell more than the devil—we suppose that his friend, the Duke of Savoy, partook of the same salutary feeling; and the blood of the Waldenses, that had been running for centuries, ceased to flow.

From Cromwell, let us turn to his friend and compatriot, John Milton. Imperishable names! Sworn brothers in the cause of freedom—for which, the one prayed and fought, and the other prayed and wrote. Milton's love of literature was inferior only to his love of liberty. To enlarge his mind and refine his taste, he had early in life visited Italy, where he received distinguished honor. And his cultivated mind must have been intensely sensible of the delights of such a tour. How sensible, none but a kindred spirit can tell. And yet, he tore himself from such enjoyment, and abandoned also a cherished scheme of a visit to Sicily and Greece, and returned to his native land. But was it gold, or fame, or power, that led him to this sacrifice? Hear him, and let literary men treasure the noble sentiment. "I esteemed it dishonorable," said he, "for me to be lingering abroad, even for the improvement of my mind, while my fellow-citizens were *contending for liberty at home.*" It was not that he loved the classic scenes he left, less—but that he loved liberty more. And he returned to mingle in the strife which was to determine whether Britons were to be freemen or slaves—or rather, whether freedom should have a sanctuary on earth.

I have somewhere seen a print which represented Shakspeare as witnessing, in a dream, a procession of those characters to which his pen afterwards gave an imperishable existence. Had the veil been thus drawn from the future which hung heavy and dark on the mind of the old blind, hated, and feared author of the Defence of the English People, what visions of glory would burst on his aching sight? From that hovel to which he had retired to die, overwhelmed by domestic afflictions and public obloquy, he would have beheld results more glorious, worked out by himself and his coadjutors, than those which floated before his youthful hope, in indistinct, yet magnificent proportions, when he trusted that he should yet "write something which posterity would not willingly let die." Milton would have

seen that cause, which then lay bleeding and prostrate, and whose advocates Charles the Second delighted to abase, arise from its temporary overthrow, stronger for its fall. He would have seen thrones crumbling—despots bowed to the dust—the sceptre passing to the hands of the people—and his own loved Britain rising to claim the liberties for which he contended. And far on in that glorious perspective, he would have seen that banner that was unfurled the 4th July, 1776—bearing on either side its ample folds, that all men might read and take courage—the freeman's watch-word—"*Resistance to tyrants is obedience to God.*"

American liberty is the offspring of the Bible. It was asserted and maintained by the descendants of men who, though they could leave their homes, with all the dear and cherished associations that are connected with that word—could not leave their Bibles; men who were willing to encounter the untold difficulties of an almost unknown continent, and the horrors of savage warfare, in order that they might enjoy the right those Bibles conferred, "freedom to worship God." In other lands, the influence of the Word of God has been a thing superinduced on already existing institutions—which were to be reformed, as well as they might, by its spirit. And hence, amid the monuments of liberty, and sometimes strangely connected with them, we are startled and grieved by relics of a tyrannical age. But our institutions were originally moulded by men, to whom the Bible was not a sealed book. And consequently, amongst ourselves we find the most distinct acknowledgment of the rights of the people, that the world has ever heard.

It would not be a difficult matter to shew, that some of the noblest privileges of American citizenship were not the fruit of political theories, but were urged on politicians themselves by religious bodies. Thomas Jefferson desired that it might be engraven on his tomb-stone, that he was the author of the Declaration of American Independence—

the mover of the famous act of the Virginia Legislature, "for establishing religious freedom"—and the founder of the University of Virginia. We do not dispute the honor he claims from his connection with our University. Nor would we withhold all proper praise for his agency in establishing civil and religious liberty. But the Declaration of American Independence was preceded by the Mecklenburg Declaration, drawn up and proclaimed by a number of Presbyterians, May 20th, 1775. It was in reference to this document, that John Adams said to Thomas Jefferson: "You know, that if I had possessed it, I would have made the hall of Congress echo and re-echo with it, fifteen months before your Declaration of Independence. The genuine sense of America, at that movement, was never so well expressed, before nor since." Nor was he the original or most efficient asserter of the necessity of separation of Church and State. On this point, I am happy to be able to quote the testimony of an eminently competent witness. Dr. Robert Baird, in his valuable work on Religion in America, says: "It was not Jefferson that induced the State of Virginia to pass the Act of Separation. That must be ascribed to the petitions and other efforts of the Presbyterians and Baptists."* Hear another witness, equally competent. Dr. Lang, of New South Wales, visited this country some years since, and has published his observations to the world. He examined particularly into the subject of religious freedom. And to establish his conclusions, he has published with his work, the original documents which he procured from the library of the State House, in Richmond. He says, that instead of the American clergy "having been opposed to the voluntary system, as they are supposed to have been, the fact is, that the original introduction of the voluntary system, was wholly and solely the work of a large and influential portion of the American clergy themselves; and so far from

*Religion in America, p. 106.

the separation of the Church and State being carried with a high and revolutionary hand over the influence and opposition of the sacerdotal order, through the mere political manœuvring of Mr. Jefferson, the fact is, that the Legislature of Virginia, in which that important measure was originally carried, and through whose influence and example it was subsequently extended gradually over the whole nation, was itself borne into it, unwillingly, by the clerical pressure from without."*

The truth of Dr. Lang's assertion can easily be shewn, by an appeal to facts. Mr. Jefferson's boasted act was drawn up and passed, not till 1785. But the Presbytery of Hanover, at its first meeting after the Declaration of Independence, addressed the House of Delegates of Virginia, in a memorial, recommending a complete disunion of Church and State, and urging them to leave the support of the Gospel, to the unaided efforts of its friends. In this noble paper, worthy of Virginia in her palmiest days, the Presbytery earnestly entreats, "that all laws now in force in this Commonwealth, which countenance religious domination, may be speedily repealed; that all of every religious sect may be protected in the full exercise of their several modes of worship; exempted from all taxes for the support of any church whatsoever, farther than what may be agreeable to their own private choice or voluntary obligation."†

During the period that elapsed from 1777 to 1779, a plan was formed and matured for passing a law for "a general assessment" on the people of Virginia, for the support of all denominations, and the bill for this purpose had actually been ordered to a third reading. But the Presbytery, true to its principles, again took the field. A memorial, which was drawn up by Samuel S. Smith, D. D.,—the founder and first President of this Institution—in connection with Rev. David Rice, was promptly presented to the Legislature,

* Religion and Education in America, by John Dunmore Lang, D. D., p. 92.
† Religion in America, p. 107.

earnestly remonstrating against the proposed law. In 1784, the cherished plan was revived, and advocated by the almost irresistible influence of Patrick Henry. A bill for the incorporation of the several different denominations, passed by a large vote; and another, in favor of a general assessment, passed two readings, and was ordered to a third. And again, with true Puritan firmness, did the same body of men oppose the scheme. The Presbyterians held a convention, at which another memorial was drawn up, and the Rev. Dr. John B. Smith—another distinguished ornament of Hampden Sidney College—was appointed to urge the truths of this paper on the notice of the House, and was actually heard at its bar, for three successive days. The opposition succeeded—the scheme was abandoned, we trust, forever. Thus, it is manifest, that the people of Virginia owe their exemption from the payment of tithes, to the very men who would, to a large extent, have been the receivers of those tithes.

The remarks we have made might be extended indefinitely; but enough, it is hoped, has been said to establish the position, that the Bible is the fountain of Liberty.

Fellow-members of the Union Society: I could not better shew my sense of the honor you have done me by enrolling my name on your list of adopted brothers, than by commending to your affectionate reverence, that Book which proclaims liberty to man. You will soon be called to take your stands as sentinels on the ramparts of our free institutions. And do you wish to fit yourselves for the noble trust? Imbibe the spirit of the Bible. It will not only teach you your rights, but fit you to enjoy and defend them. And allow me to say in parting, that if you will yield your hearts to its guidance, it will lead you to that "better country, even a heavenly," where perfect freedom is found, in obedience to God.

Gentlemen: It is a pleasing reflection, that the venerable Institution with which you are connected, was founded in

faith and prayer by men who loved the Bible, not only for its saving truths, but also for its free principles. I rejoice that men of a kindred spirit now have the control of it. Though the lips that give you instruction, are "wet with Castalian dews," yet their utterance will not be guided merely by the wisdom which man teacheth, but will be elevated and hallowed by the influence of the Oracles of Imperishable Truth.

The world, then, has a right to expect, that the Students of Hampden Sidney College will ever be the champions of the *Bible*, and of *Liberty*.

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